

## Frameworks for Social Change

Frameworks can assist us in thinking about "what's next" for us and contextualizing our day-to-day work. These three frameworks are for understanding how campaigns and movements change over time.

### Six Stage Campaign Planning Framework (Martin Luther King, Jr.)

For assisting the group to think ahead about what they'll need to be ready for as their campaign builds. In this case, the group begins by framing their issue, then goes into the following stages:

1. Gather information
2. Do education and leadership development
3. Negotiate with target
4. Increase motivation and commitment for the struggle ahead
5. Direct action
6. Create new relationship with opponent. which reflects the new power reality.

[Based on Martin Luther King-related campaigns in the Deep South of the U.S.]

Read more at <http://www.dfong.com/nonviol/nda.html>

### Five Stage Revolutionary Movement Framework (George Lakey)

Working with developmental sociology, this framework assumes that for revolutionary change a movement (or coalition of movements) needs to work on many levels at once and in a cyclical way.

For simplicity of teaching, the five stages are presented in sequence which shows how each preceding stage builds capacity for the next stage. This framework assumes that polarization strongly increases in society as the movement(s) develop. The five stages are:

1. Cultural preparation
2. Organization-building
3. Confrontation
4. Mass noncooperation
5. Parallel institutions which can carry out the legitimate functions formerly carried out by the Old Order (economic, maintaining infrastructure, decision-making, etc.)

Created by George Lakey, described in *Globalize Liberation*, edited by David Solnit.

Read more: See article by George Lakey from Training for Change website.

## **Eight Stage Reform Social Movement Framework (Movement Action Plan, by Bill Moyer)**

Draws from social movements in liberal democratic societies which have brought about important changes while often opening the way to new movements, as the civil rights movement opened political space for women's movement, gay rights movement, and many other movements.

This framework emphasizes the intimate relationship between movement development and public opinion and minimizes polarization; the regime typically reacts to very heavy build-up of momentum by granting a reform in order to stave off polarization that might be dangerous to it. The framework gives direct action a prominent place and also explains the let-down which typically occurs in successful social movements after the mass mobilizations force a political shift which is largely hidden from activist view.

This framework was widely used by labor and community organizers in Taiwan while the dictatorship was fraying and space was opening up there.

[Created by Bill Moyer and described in his last book, *Doing Democracy*, available from the Training for Change website.]

Read more: See below for a description of the Movement Action Plan. [Click here](#) for a 40-page detailed description of the Movement Action Plan.

### **A Map of the Course**

(from pages 17-25 of *Grassroots and Nonprofit Leadership: A Guide for Organizations in Changing Times*, by Berit Lakey, George Lakey, Rod Napier and Janice Robinson)

The rich history of social movements means that we do not entirely have to make it up as we go along. We can learn from what worked and what didn't, and the lessons from movements then inform the choices we make as we steer our organizations. The authors have learned a lot about the life cycle of movements from longtime organizer Bill Moyer, who worked with Dr. King on the staff of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, was a major strategist for the anti-nuclear power movement, and assisted a variety of other movements and organizations. From his study and experience Bill has created a model of how successful movements achieve their goals, the Movement Action Plan (MAP).

MAP is a development model; that is, it shows how movements evolve, step by step. Just as we think about human beings with a development model (infancy, adolescence, middle age), so also it helps us think about our social change work to have a framework of stages.

Of course MAP is only one way of looking at social movements. We have found it useful, especially in understanding how to steer an organization through the ups and downs of a cause. Bill has kindly allowed us to summarize his model for this book, and we recommend that you read it with the history of your issue in mind. First, a word about models. A model airplane is a simplified version of the real thing. You wouldn't want to fly in it, but it gives you an idea of what it's like and can even be useful for certain tests. An architect often builds a model of a building before the real thing goes up with all its complications. Like all models, MAP is a simplification of a very complex reality, and helps us to face reality with more clarity and perspective.

Bill's model shows us how the development stages of a successful movement relate to public opinion, so before we get into the internal life of the movement, we'll take a quick overview of the public. Before there is a social movement around a certain injustice, the body politic seems to be asleep. The toxic waste is being routinely dumped, for example, with office holders looking the other way and public opinion preoccupied with other things. This is stage one.

Then stress builds and the body politic wakes up. In stages two, three, and four, more and more of the public notices what's going on, and the office holders get busy reassuring the public that they are taking care of the problem and it's OK to go back to sleep. In each of stages two, three, and four, the movement's growth is in a different place.

By stages five and six the majority of the public agrees with the movement that change is needed (the war should be stopped, or nuclear power is too dangerous, for example). There's a debate though, about possible alternatives. Stage five is a letdown time for activists, and can be tricky; some movements just die in this stage instead of moving ahead to success.

At last comes success, in stages seven and eight. Many office holders are proclaiming that they really wanted these changes all along, while some of the holdouts are being voted out of office. New groups are spinning off the main reform movement to start the process all over again. Most of the public is glad to stop talking about civil rights, or Vietnam, or nuclear power, and go back to their individual concerns (which, from an activist's point of view, looks like going back to sleep!).

### **Stage One: Business as Usual**

Only a relatively few people care about the issue at this point, and they form small groups to support each other. Their objective: to get people thinking. They do their best to spread the word and often try small action projects.

### **Stage Two: Failure of Established Channels**

A major reason why most of the public does not inform itself and act on an injustice is that people think (or hope) that established structures are taking care of it. "Surely the government is watching out for the safety of our ground water supply." "The government is researching AIDS." "Corporation scientists know which chemicals are dangerous in our workplace and which are not."

In this stage the small groups challenge the established channels. They often do research, or get victims of injustice to file formal complaints. They may sue governmental agencies, or use any opportunities to appeal that exist in the regulations. Usually the activists lose, at this stage, but it is very important that they take these steps. Stage two is essential for change, since large-scale participation will not happen as long as people believe in the established channels. In fact, you'll find that, by stage two, polls show fifteen to twenty percent of public opinion is leaning toward a change.

### **Stage Three: Ripening Conditions/Education and Organizing**

Now the pace picks up considerably, because many people who earlier did not want to listen become interested. The movement creates many new groups who work on this issue, largely through education. The groups send speakers to religious groups and union halls; they do marches through their communities; they hold house meetings and news conferences. Much of the content of what they say is refuting powerholders' claims: "People start pollution; people can stop it," "Radiation is not really all that bad for you," "Plenty is already being done to prevent AIDS." This stage can take a very long time or a short time, depending on many things, but constant outreach, through education and forming new groups is essential for the movement to take off. By now, polls show twenty to thirty percent agree that there is a problem or an injustice.

### **Stage Four: Takeoff**

This stage is usually initiated by a trigger event, a dramatic happening that puts a spotlight on the problem, sparking wide public attention and concern. Sometimes the trigger event is created by the movement. In 1963 the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, headed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., focused on Birmingham, Alabama, in a direct action campaign which filled the jails and highlighted the evils of segregation with vivid pictures of police dogs and fire hoses. The Birmingham campaign triggered a national and international response, which resulted in the passage of major civil rights legislation.

Sometimes the trigger event just happens, like the near meltdown at the Three Mile Island nuclear reactor in 1979. Three Mile Island (TMI) precipitated massive nonviolent protest and propelled many new people into activity. Previous movement growth had been substantial, but TMI triggered a crisis atmosphere that brought depth and breadth to the movement. MAP shows that the takeoff stage needs the preparation of stages two and three. Nuclear power provides an example we can explore.

Many years before TMI, the Fermi nuclear plant in the city of Detroit nearly melted down. A disaster similar or worse than TMI threatened then, yet there was no social crisis and spurt of antinuclear organizing. Why? Because there was no previous social movement challenging the normal channels (stage two) and no education and organizing (stage three). An event becomes a trigger event when a movement has first done its homework.

Because of the high media profile in this stage, many people associate social change with stage four. Often one or more large coalitions form at this time. Celebrities join the movement, the

powerholders are shocked by the new opposition and publicity and try to discredit the movement, and polls show forty to sixty percent of the public say they oppose the injustice or current policies. Activists often unrealistically expect a quick victory at this point and work around the clock. Long rambling meetings occur in which new people come and try to make decisions without the necessary procedures in place. The issue is seen in isolation from other issues.

The objectives of stage four are to build and coordinate a new grassroots movement and to win over public opinion. Part of winning the public is connecting the demands of the movement with widely held values (like freedom, fairness, or democracy).

### **Stage Five: Perception of Failure**

There's an old phrase: "Two steps forward, one step back." Stage five is the step back, in the perception of many activists. Numbers are down at demonstrations, the media pay less attention, and the policy changes have not yet been won. The powerholders' official line is, "The movement failed." The media focuses on splits in the movement and especially on activities which offend public sensibilities.

It is the excitement and lack of planning on stage four that create the sense of failure in stage five. By believing that success is at hand, activists can become disillusioned and despairing when they realize they aren't there yet. Hoping to recapture the excitement and confidence of stage four, some groups create Rambo-style actions of anger and violence or become a permanent counterculture sect that is isolated and ineffective.

Fortunately, a great many activists do not become discouraged, or if they do, accept it as part of the process. They treat it like rafters on a river who most of all love excitement of the white water, but also accept the slow times in between.

Smart strategists lay out strategic, achievable and measurable objectives, and smart movements celebrate them as they achieve them along the way. The powerholders may try to crush the movement through repression at this point, even if they have felt constrained before by a civil liberties tradition. Even repression, however, can sometimes be responded to in the spirit of celebration, as a symptom of achievement.

### **Stage Six: Winning Over the Majority**

In this stage the movement transforms. Protest in crisis gives way to long-term struggle with powerholders. The goal is to win majority opinion. Many new groups, which include people who previously were not active, are formed. The new groups do grassroots education and action. The issue shows up in electoral campaigns, and some candidates get elected on this platform. Broader coalitions become possible, and mainstream institutions expand their own programs to include the issue.

Until stage six, much of the movement's energy was focused on opposition (to toxic waste, to war, to homelessness, etc.). In stage six, sixty to seventy-five percent of the public agrees on a

need for change. There is no vast audience ready to think about alternatives to existing policies, and the smart movement offers some. Mainstream institutions can be helpful at this point. One example comes from the anti-Vietnam War movement: universities responded to stage four with peace studies courses and departments, and during stage six many of the scholars involved began thinking about alternatives to the war system.

The powerholders are not passive. They try to discredit and disrupt the movement, insist there is no positive alternative, promote bogus reforms, and sometimes create crisis events to scare the public. The powerholders themselves also become more split in this period.

The dangers of this stage are: national organizations and staff may dominate the movement and reduce grassroots energy; reformers may compromise too much or try to deliver the movement into the hands of politicians; a belief may spread that the movement is failing because it has not yet succeeded.

### **Stage Seven: Achieving Alternatives**

Stages seven and eight could be called managing success. They are tricky, however, because the game isn't over until it's over. In stage seven, the goals are to recognize the movement's success (not as easy as it sounds!), the empower activists and their organizations to act effectively, to achieve a major objective or demand, and to achieve that demand within the framework of a paradigm shift — a new model or way of thinking about the issue.

Goals or demands need to be consistent with a different way of looking at things: a new framework or paradigm. If a civil rights movement simply demands some changes of personnel in government, industry, or schools, it will get more women, people of color or lesbians and gays occupying functions that continue business as usual, including policies which oppress women, people of color, and gays. Social movements are usually much more creative than that, and project new visions of how things can be. A successful social movement, therefore, can gain objectives that, although grudgingly yielded by the powerholders, introduce a new way of operating and of being.

Stage seven is a long process, not an event. The struggle shifts in this stage from opposing present policies to creating dialogue about which alternatives to adopt. The movement will have differences within itself about alternatives, and different groups will market different alternatives to the public. The central powerholders will try their last gambits, including study commissions and bogus alternatives, and then be forced to change their policies, have their policies defeated, or lose office.

It's not unusual for another trigger event to come along (the Chernobyl nuclear meltdown) or be created (the 1965 Selma freedom march in the civil rights movement), which gives increased energy to the cause and wins over still more allies.

Each movement needs to develop an endgame which makes sense in terms of its own goals and situation. The fight against nuclear power is an example of change in which there was never a showdown in the United States Congress. Instead, the movement created enough obstacles in the

U.S. market to result in a de facto moratorium on new plants, partly by showing them to be unacceptably costly.

### **Stage Eight: Consolidation and Moving On**

The movement leaders need to protect and extend the successes achieved. The movement also becomes midwife to other social movements. We saw growing out of the 1960s civil rights movement, the student movement, the anti-Vietnam war movement, the farmworkers union, the women's movement, the American Indian movement, and others. The long-term focus of stage eight is to achieve a paradigm shift, to change the cultural framework.

The paradigm shift the civil rights movement initiated is still a major part of the U.S. agenda thirty-five years later: diversity as a positive value. In the 1950s, difference was shunned and feared. The rule was to conform. Even rock and roll was attacked as "a communist plot," because it was different from prevailing pop music. Ethnic minorities were taught to be as white and middle class as possible to fit in — that was their only hope (and not a large one) for acceptance. The momentum of the civil rights movement and the movements it midwived continues today as an often intense struggle to see difference differently and to create the structures and processes that make diversity a strength in building community.

While the movement is consolidating its gains and dealing with backlash from those who never were persuaded, the powerholders are adapting to new policies and conditions and often claiming the movement's success as their own. At the same time, they may fail to carry out agreements, fail to pass sufficient new legislation, or weaken the impact of new structures by appointing people who are resistant to the change. A major pitfall awaiting activists in stage eight, therefore, is neglecting to make sure of institutional follow-through.

In this stage, the movement not only can celebrate the specific changes it has gained, but also can notice and celebrate the larger ripple effect it has in other aspects of society and even in other societies. The U.S. movement against nuclear movement was inspired by the mass occupations of construction sites by German environmentalists. On this shrinking planet, we get to learn from and inspire each other internationally.

#### **If You Think You're Lost, Check the Map**

The course of the river is winding, and sometimes it divides and goes in unexpected directions. Maybe you feel lost; maybe someone wants you to feel lost. Notice that powerholders generally continue the policy you are campaigning against, even while they secretly are laying plans to announce new policies and to prepare the public to accept them. They deliberately hide their defeat from the public, understandably. When you give in to discouragement, you are accepting their definition of the situation. You don't need to — a strategic framework enables you to define the situation.

The last four years of the anti-Vietnam War movement provide our example. The U.S. government stepped up its bombing of Vietnam, exceeding all the bombing of Europe in World War II, and publicly stated its commitment to continuing the war indefinitely. This visible,

aggressive policy depressed most antiwar activists, who thought that their ten years of effort had been wasted.

Activists did not know that the U.S. government was at the same time quietly beginning to give up the war. The United States began peace talks in Paris with the North Vietnamese. It then gave in to two key movement demands: withdrawing U.S. troops from Vietnam and ending the military draft. Movement activists saw these moves as irrelevant plots that undercut the movement's opposition. In the last years, the anti-Vietnam War movement became totally depressed. Then, suddenly, the war ended. Former government officials have acknowledged that the movement was extremely effective in ending the war. To activists at the time, however, it felt just the opposite!

You're likely to find yourself beached on that same shore with those activists unless you have a stable strategic framework to use when your work seems discouraging. Check out the MAP — it may keep you going long enough to win!

[Read more about the Movement Action Plan in Bill Moyer's last book, *Doing Democracy*, available from the Training for Change website.]